



Pass Christian, Mississippi

The Tricentennial

Volume 2, Issue Thirteen December 15, 1999

★ Final Edition ★

Gratitude and Congratulations!

This Newsletter issue is the last and final release representing the two-year existence of the Tricentennial Committee, its activity reportings, history and heritage reviews, and community news.

The Editorial Group headed by Dan Ellis and Dayton Robinson has been pleased with the favorable comments sent by letter or by word of mouth. The cost of production was limited to volunteer help rendered by Mae Parker and her Senior Center volunteers, and later by Jessie Heitzmann and her league of volunteers, including earlier support by Jayme Condra and Jean Moreland. The writers and column contributors were all free-will gifts including the keying-in of information.

The Tricentennial Committee's monthly financial reports to the Board Members show that the only significant outlay of newsletter costs were for postage and printing. Even the printing costs were greatly reduced by the Jenkins Boys at Southern Printing as their community sharing contribution.

Mailings went out to an average of 800 households, some months as high as 900 and some months as low as 700. There were 15 newsletter issues in 1998 and 13 newsletter issues in 1999 (averaging about \$225 per issue cost). The appeal for membership subscriptions resulted in approximately 300 households responding.

The monthly meetings of Board Members averaged 15 eager and interested volunteer members who offered their attentive involvement in all committee projects and sponsored events.

(Continued on page 2)

Passing the Torch

On Thursday, January 20, 2000, the next gala community social will be held at the Espy Avenue Community Center. The theme is *Passing the Torch* – which will be the official "Kick-Off" for the inauguration of the Pass Christian Lighthouse Society. Requests for membership are in the form of contributions or pledges. Everyone is invited to attend and participate.

Dayton Robinson has outlined the procedure for Passing the Torch, as follows. As current Treasurer, he will expedite the change of names of bank accounts from Tricentennial to *Lighthouse Society*. This includes all monies received as contributions and for new memberships in the PCLS. (*Pass Christian Lighthouse Society*) and escrow accounts for ongoing projects.

Following the January 20th dinner function, the first meeting of the PCLS will be held on Tuesday, January 25th, 2000 at 6:pm at City Hall. At this meeting, a Board of Directors, consisting of nine members will be elected. A slate of officers will also be voted on, consisting of president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer who are in addition to the Board of Directors, and will be ex-officio members of the Board. (Proxy votes are unacceptable, and only one vote is eligible per joint membership)

PCLS Membership – \$50 or more

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, St, Zip: _____

Mail to: Tricentennial, POB 354, PCMS 39571

(Continued from page 1)

Ken Austin, Chairman of the Events Committee guided a large number of volunteers to be involved in the April 1998 "Kick-Off" Dinner Meeting and the January 1999 "Jubilation" Party.

Food offerings from dependable and loyal contributors were made by Annie's Restaurant, the Harbor View Café, and the Rusty Pelican -- with huge food supplements made for the first gala personally by Ken Austin, and personally by Charles and Melanie Melson for the second gala.

Jennie Lou Mintz did an outstanding job in heading up her cast of volunteers for the *Jazz in the Pass*, which was an all-day affair at the Park in May 1999. Through her expertise and knowledge of jazz groups, all the bands that she invited, participated at no charge.

Margie Hamilton and Dana Dedeaux pulled together a Krewe to ride the Tricentennial Mardi Gras Float, which won a first place trophy. Further, the Hamilton's donated the proceeds from the sale of the float to the Tricentennial Committee.

Volunteers and Money, that's where it's at! Initial money contributions came in first from the Friends of the Library, followed by the City of Pass Christian, the Rotary Club, the Garden Club, the Historical Society, the PCIsles/Henderson Point Asso., which was then followed by a whopper from County Supervisor David LaRosa.

This seed money was most essential in getting the machinery of volunteers motivated and moving. It was these monies that generated the newsletters to get out the word. In turn, the newsletters promoted activities and memberships which accounted for nearly \$8,000 of the \$26,000 of donations and contributions raised.

One of the stated Committee Missions was to engender a renewed appreciation of Pride, Cultural Awareness, and Community Spirit. Was this goal accomplished? – Indeed it was!

Eleven flags representing the "Flags that flew over Pass Christian" were purchased for \$1300 and will be turned over to the PC Historical Society. Dayton Robinson carted the flags for oral presentations to about ten events.

Starting the first line of volunteer exhibits, was Michelle Smith with her magnificent sculpturing of the bust of d'Iberville, a wonderful gift to the City's Heritage. It was bronzed by the Tricentennial Committee for a cost of \$2000 – and became an added gift to the PC Historical Society.

Brian Nettles molded the d'Iberville Stone – another item which will be housed at the Historical Society.

Geri Dendis rendered a beautiful painting of the "Pass Christian Lighthouse" and presented it to the Tricentennial Committee for fund-raising.

Buddy Diboll painstakingly worked for five months on the detailed model of the PC Lighthouse with its landscape setting in the mid-1800's.

These last two items will be presented to the **Pass Christian Lighthouse Society** for use in promotions.

Unfortunately, the beautiful replica of the PC Lighthouse made by Tracy Gordon Goff was totally consumed by all who attended the last January Jubilation. The cake was yummy -- besides having looked great.

Virgil Harris headed up the Heritage Committee, which has detailed the wording and the placement for three official Magnolia Historical Markers, the first of which was placed at the Harbor this past October. The remaining two markers will be dedicated in the year 2000, each costing \$1500, with funds set aside in escrow.

Who will be the - Torchbearer?

At one of the Society's public functions, as fundraising draws to a conclusion, a drawing of names through a lottery procedure will take place. The lucky name drawn will be the Official Torchbearer, who will turn on the lights of the Lighthouse at its dedication ceremonies.

Early Bird Special

Those persons sending in their membership donations prior to January 20, will not only have their names listed as a Founding Charter Member with the Secretary of State's Office, but will have double chances in the Lottery drawing. Two tickets with their names will be submitted for the drawing.

All members after January 20, will still be eligible, but limited to one ticket in the draw.

Will you be the Torchbearer?

History of Union Quarters — Pass Christian

Following the Civil War, the home at 243 East Beach was used as Union Quarters. The ongoing preservation and restoration of this home keeps it as one of the most historical sites in the Pass. (Written and researched by Dan Ellis — Last of a Series.)

Dr. George K. Pratt and wife, Mary Louise Moore Pratt

The Pratts were very close friends of Mrs. Bidwell who, on many occasions were guests at the beautiful mansion. Through the years, their children were also welcome for long vacationing periods since the Bidwells had no children of their own. When the Bidwell's developed financial problems with their properties and businesses in New Orleans, they turned to the Pratts for a loan. Following the death of David Bidwell, Louisa Bidwell took over management of the businesses but had never succeeded in paying off the loans on the mortgaged properties.

Louisiana law prevented personal or family doctors from benefitting from deed transfers of property or wealth of their patients. To remedy the debt, Mrs. Bidwell instituted a "Will" dated June 4, 1890, bequeathing her Pass Christian property to the six Pratt children. This "Will" was probated in June 1900 indicating that Mrs. Bidwell had died that year.

As guardians and parents of the then minor children, the Pratts took full possession of the house and even further enhanced it in 1910, with a new dining room, a solarium, and a porte-cochere.

The children were John O., George, Jr., Albert, Louise, John G., and Adela. It is presumed that once they grew into adulthood and marriage, the large number of siblings sold the property at the demise of their parents.

Frank Wharton, wife Allie Lee, and Mrs. Margaret L. McGrath

Frank Wharton and his wife Allie Lee initially acquired the Lizana property which adjoins the Union Quarters on the east, on September 15, 1937. Wharton operated a grocery store there until World War II began. Prior to entering the Coast Guard, he rented the store front as the Pass Christian Post Office. Upon receiving a service connected injury, he returned home and opened the Wharton Hardware Store after the post office moved to a new location.

In March of 1944, he and his wife's aunt, Mrs. Margaret L. McGrath, jointly purchased the Union Quarters property with the intentions of separate living quarters. But, it wasn't long afterward that Mrs. McGrath moved back to the Nelson Hotel, just down the street, where as owner and

manager she loved the daily hustle and bustle.

With the urging of the Chamber of Commerce's Mrs. Elena Fitzpatrick, a Magnolia Historic Marker was placed at the home on October 6, 1960. The planting of the bronze plaque was attended by a formal dedication ceremony.

Camille's wrath struck the home in 1969 as it destroyed many others in its path, but only the roof had to be replaced to bring the mansion back to its normal beauty.

In March 1979, the Whartons opened the home to visitors during the Spring Pilgrimage for the first time since the roof's destruction. Ladies were dressed in antebellum attire and greeted the hundreds of guests to the home which was furnished with period antiques. One of these ladies in attendance was their daughter, Mrs. Ann Wharton Kitchings.

Ann, in remembering the Pratts as a young girl, had been invited to a party "next door" where the birthday celebration was held in the solarium.

Heinz and Frances Hoffmann

After almost four years of being unoccupied, Heinz and Frances Hoffman purchased the home on March 1, 1990. Through the past years the Hoffmans have been slowly and painstakingly renovating the bottom floors of the staid old mansion which had been stripped of its furnishings and had laid in neglect for many years.

This past summer, when Frances reached her retirement eligibility, both, Heinz and Frances, former educators in New York, have moved permanently into their magnificent historic large dwelling. They immediately launched a full scale endeavor to remove all the paint from the main house and the attached el and garconniere.

Because this year's Christmas season is the first opportunity for the Hoffman's to remain in the Pass, they took time out to decorate the staidly mansion as it hasn't been seen in more than twenty years. It was a beautiful presentation to *Christmas in the Pass*.

The Union Quarters Historic Mansion will have its first official showing in the Tour of Homes sponsored by the Pass Christian Historical Society.

New Year's Eve

by Jessie Heitzmann

*Yet another year has tiptoed past
As life held our attention fast.
A sneaky thief, this Old Man Time.
So subtly he commits his crime.*

*Was it not just yesterday
When foolish youth wished time
away?*

*Life seemed an endless path to stroll,
With no thought of ever growing old.*

*With age now comes a faster pace
As Father Time joins in the race.
A challenge, as each new year wanes,
To make the most of what remains.*

*Precious, these years we dare not
waste,
For the riper the fruit, the sweeter the
taste.
This, our legacy, bestowed at birth . . .
But one fleeting moment upon this
earth.*



Congratulations to Christmas in the Pass Committee

An excellent fun time evening was spent in downtown Pass Christian at the past *Christmas in the Pass*. The Committee members, merchants, and service organizations are commended for their open house exuberance. The boat and yacht owners always add such a dramatic lighted spectacle offshore. This joyous evening festivity has grown and is such a wonderful family heritage commitment.

Christmas Parties

The *Friends of the Library* held their annual get-together and had the opportunity to introduce the new Librarian who will take over when Ann departs to become a full time house-marm.

The *Pass Christian Historical Society* annual cocktail party was held at the home of the Havens, who hosted a wonderful evening for all.

The annual joint supper hosted by the **Rotary** and **Chamber** was a great evening. Adele Bielenberg headed a reading on George Washington in commemorating the 200-year anniversary since Washington's death. Eaton Lang showed his chimney tongs and shovel which were owned by George more than two centuries ago.

Outstanding Citizen of the Year! Otis Gates, Sr.

Otis retired from the U.S. Army following 20 years of service and went on to become a registered nurse and supervisor of respiratory therapy at the Biloxi Veterans Affairs Medical Center for the ensuing 18 years. Keeping very active, he continues in many volunteer capacities. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Gulf Coast Community Action Agency; he is Treasurer of the Grand Knights of Peter Claver, Council #26; and he is a member of the Pass Christian' Planning and Zoning Commission.

He is also chairman of the "*We Care Committee*" which raises funds for those in emergency need by expediting community barbecue and fish fries. These social and charity functions are always well attended by local residents in answering the call to assist those in need.

Otis also dutifully fills a part-time driver position for the Coastal Family Health mobile unit and serves as Parish Council President for Mother of Mercy Catholic Church where he is also a member of the Choir. For these and many reasons, he received an Apostolic Blessing and Citation for his outstanding spiritual and community services and is the second African American to receive the *Pass Christian Outstanding Citizen Award* as presented by the Pass Christian Rotary Club.

The Charlot Sisters and White Picket Fences

from Wiegand Historical Files

During the 1970s, three sisters, Regina and Rita Charlot, and Clara Charlot-Elliott lived on Second Street off Fleitas Avenue. As descendants of "Free People of Color," they had owned the last beach front property, located at 511 East Beach. It had been the home of their father, Christophe Charlot, since the beginning of the 1900s. This house has since, been considerably renovated, but some of the original timbers remain.

Christophe owned a herd of cattle which were let free to roam the streets for pasturage, as had been the custom for years. This eventually caused the proliferation of white picket fences along Scenic Drive. Of particular interest, was one cow with long horns and the unusual knack to "open any gate in the Pass," as related by one of the sisters. Some residents had to install "drive-over trip-bars" at their carriage gates in order to inhibit the astute cow's passage. During hot summer months, as flies would bother the cows, they would all promenade into the Sound to bathe in the waters head deep and stand in the shade of the private wharves and bath houses. At night, it was not unusual for carriages to swerve around a cow that bedded down on the roadway.

Christophe had his own private oyster reef in the Gulf directly in front of his beach home, as was the manner in which a number of home owners along the beachfront all the way to Biloxi. Christophe also maintained a little building where he sold oysters and fresh fish to the local residents.

The Charlot sisters also recalled that their grandfather, *L'homme Jim*, had owned three schooners which were named *Morning Star*, *Uncle Joe*, and the *James Charlot*. He would carry oysters, charcoal, and firewood to New Orleans through Lake Pontchartrain to the New Basin Canal to reach the City. There, he would pick up barrels of provisions to bring back to the Pass. He was known as a kindly man who never hesitated to give a helping hand to his family and neighbors. Jim Charlot was a descendant of the original Charles (Charlot in French), who was a freed slave and was awarded by his former owner, the Widow Asmard, all the land which is now the central business district of Pass Christian, including the property that reached northward to the Bayou Portage marshes.

Pass Christian Developing Quietly

Two State highway signs on U.S. 90 direct attention to Pass Christian – stating "Downtown."

—And the town is changing. The old Stuff Shirt Factory has been spruced up externally with refreshed painting and signage. But, within the building, one will find a magnificent treat. It is a Mall-Maze of professionally adorned cubicles of exquisite furnishings, antiques, decorations, crafts, and paraphernalia. A small section is set aside for luncheon dining which is catered by "Come On In."

CC Lynch & Associates is erecting their new building on the south side of the tracks from the new post office, Southern Printing also built a new structure on Davis Avenue, and sculptor Brian Nettles is always changing his retail corner near the tracks.

At Davis and Second, the Community Stores and Antique mall was recently repainted, and at caddy-corner, Bonner Gallery has expanded their operations.

Ground breaking ceremonies were held at Clarence and St. Louis where "Twin Oaks" residential care facilities are planned for opening at the end of year 2000.

If this mid-town section is called "Downtown," then, "Uptown" must be at North Street near Henderson, where the Texaco Service and Deli recently opened. Just east of the station, near the car-wash, will be a "Family Dollar Store" with three adjacent retail shops. On the west side of Henderson, the AAICO Self-storage facilities are already expanding with a new ramp of mini-warehouses. And to its west is the Bell South Mobility telecommunications facility. And still further west is the new Highschool which opened this year.

During 1999, there were 66 family residential permits throughout the city and three small subdivisions ranging from 12 to 17 houses each were developed.

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Why Bother!

Billy Bourdin is not the only one faced with the dilemma of wondering if his efforts to maintain historic records of the past of the Pass actually counts for anything. It is sometimes frustrating for those who are active in community volunteerism to have others shun their community promotions and activities.

Otis Gates and all the other "Outstanding Citizen Award" recipients have also faced an occasional loss of faith when pleading with friends, neighbors, strangers, and the community-at-large to come to the aid of worthy projects.

There is something remiss when these Tricentennial Newsletters that have been mailed for the past two years each month to nearly 900 households, but only 300 cared enough to respond with a minimal check of \$15.00 to the Tricentennial Committee. But, does one look at the hole in the donut, or does one look at the donut. Thank goodness for those who responded and cared enough to bear the cost of production and distribution.

Certainly everyone is not interested in the same group causes. Each person raises their own flag in heralding or championing specific interests. Hopefully, these newsletters have been educational and uplifting enough, even for those who have not yet been motivated -- to somehow stimulate an interest in the reconstruction of the Pass Christian Lighthouse. Although the tower will only consist of concrete block, it is a symbol - a beacon - for a new Millennium in the Pass, and a symbol of past heritage. It was the first Lighthouse on Mississippi's mainland.

Why bother? --Well, why not!

One lady sent in a check for \$50 for membership in the Lighthouse Society with a note clearly stating her grievance that \$50 was much too much for someone on a restricted retirement income. Her grievance is well taken, nevertheless, she reflected on its purpose and sent in her membership check anyway. --And, indeed, she will be remembered.

For anyone not able to send in the full amount, please don't hesitate to send in something -- even a little at a time. Show your interest. Show that you care. Let's all bother about it enough to raise the money and raise the tower as a symbol of Pass Christian Community Spirit.

Lighthouses and Murray

Murray Rabalais of the 4R's recently built a stained glass replica of the Pass Marianne lighthouse.

It is complete with electrical lighting and was built so well that Alice Russell purchased it.



Christmas in the Isles Boat Parade

The annual boat parade gets started at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 18th. About 12 boats have committed to make the hour-and-a-half voyage from the Bay up Sandy Hook, returning to Bayou Boisdore (Bayou Malini). Detours are made into each of the canal cuts along the way go as far as the Malini Dead End to return to their rendezvous to party the rest of the night.

No one seems to have kept count as to how many years this Christmas boat parade has existed, but it very well may be the oldest on the Coast. "Admiral-in-Charge" Bill Mahoney has been heading up the parade for the last ten years when the predecessors, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary dropped it after an infamous period of time. Remembered auxiliary members were Virgil Jolley, Ed Wilcox, and John Duggan.

Thanks to Mahoney, his first year in 1989 had only 3 boats, but he has maintained the merry tradition of lighted boats. Most of the homes at the edges of the bayous and canals, spread Christmas decorations all along the way and offer toasts.

Pass Christian Lighthouse Society Charter Founders List

Lighthouse Masters

Fillette, Green Shipping Services
Hancock Bank, Leo Seals, Jr.,
Chm.
W. Dayton Robinson
Mary Catherine H. Ward

Lighthouse Keepers

Mr. & Mrs. Adair L Pedrick
Robert N. Pundsak

Lighthouse Tenders

Anonymous One
Ernest & Martha Burdette, III
John W. Cox
Diboll Scale Models
Jerry & Mary Jane Fitzpatrick
Cynthia & John Hammond
Joseph L. Laughlin
Michael & Frankie McDonald
Elaine H. Norcross
Mary Ziegler Norris
Abner K. Northrop, Jr.
Michael S. Rafferty
Drury Schneider
Etta A. Williams

Members

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Capt. & Mrs. J.W. Clark
William. & Cecile Clement
James & Loraine Cuevas
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Harriett & Yancy Robinson, Jr.
F. Herman & Yvette Rolufs
Jim & Leboria Sager
D.H. Short
Alvin J. Summy
Edna Szymanski
Mr. & Mrs. Richard L. Ward
J. Herbert & Noel Williams
Dr. & Mrs. James O. Williams

Supervisor Elect *Marlin Ladner* To Speak At *“Passing the Torch”*

For the January 20th, *“Passing the Torch”* gala affair at the Espy Road Community Center — Marlin Ladner will be the featured speaker. He was recently elected to the Supervisor position, filling the vacancy of David LaRosa who went on to run for County Tax Collector.

MAKING A *LIGHTOMETER*

That's short for a lighthouse thermometer. Now what is a lighthouse thermometer? Hanging out at McDonald's on Hwy 90 off Market Street presents some interesting conversations from a number of people who make up the "see-ya-tomarrah- 27-cent-cup-of-coffee-club." Sipping on a fresh refill of caffeine ultimately leads to any number of diverse discussion points of interest. Whoever injects what they're thinking of during a lull in the group's conversation,

may decide the topic for the next several minutes -- depending on how many people care to inject their point of view, or tidbit from prior experiences.

The morning attendees arrive anywhere from 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. before another group takes over about 9:00 a.m. After two years, the McDonald employees know all the morning addicts by their first name and usually have their coffee waiting for them by the time they hit the door and slam down their 27-cents.

A year ago, each person sat at separate tables, but tired of yelling out to each other, the tables began to merge. Most talk is about fishing, fixing things, and where to get what you want when you can't find it anywhere.

The early bunch consists of about 15 regular people, mostly men, who read the morning papers, kibitz, watch others who simply stop in for a quick take-out. Then, there are the other dozen or so who "visit" at intervals or seasons of time.

So, what is a Lightometer? The idea was spurred as a means of letting the community know what progress was taking place in raising contributions for the Lighthouse reconstruction project.

Buddy Diboll, Dan Ellis, Jim Sager, Avery Allen, and others are contributing time to build it and to gather free materials from local resources. The idea is to have it built completely free and separate from the Pass Christian Lighthouse Society. The needed wood was supplied by Keel Lumber and hardware items were supplied by Martin Hardware.

This is just its beginning!

PASS CHRISTIAN, MS

The Tricentennial

POB 354

Pass Christian, MS 39571

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